

SENATE JOINT RESOLUTION 48

By Herron

A RESOLUTION to honor the blessed memory of
Mr. Ben Marlin Gaines, Sr. of McKenzie.

WHEREAS, The members of the General Assembly are greatly saddened to learn of the passing of an extraordinary West Tennessee entrepreneur, industrialist, and philanthropist, Mr. Ben Marlin Gaines, Sr.; and

WHEREAS, Ben Gaines was an exemplary community servant and consummate professional who worked assiduously in numerous capacities to improve the quality of life for his fellow citizens; and

WHEREAS, Born on May 12, 1922, the son of Benjamin Franklin Gaines and Mary Idella Williard of Etta, Mississippi, Mr. Gaines left the poverty of a struggling cotton farm to enlist in the United States Army's 30th Infantry Regiment of the 3rd Infantry Division; and

WHEREAS, As one of the valiant soldiers in the 30th Infantry Regiment, he fought in ten major campaigns during 31 months of almost continuous combat between the invasion of North Africa on November 8, 1942, and V/E Day on May 8, 1945, the date of Germany's surrender; and

WHEREAS, Mr. Gaines and his band of brothers saw combat in Tunisia, Sicily, Southern Italy, the Anzio Beachhead, Southern France, Germany, and Austria before returning home; and

WHEREAS, Although Mr. Gaines only had a high school education, he knew the value of hard work. As a young man, after his day job he invested his evenings upholstering furniture in his garage for extra income. By the early 1950s, he was building furniture for his friend Kemmons Wilson's new chain of Holiday Inn motels. The company grew as Mr. Gaines' furniture line was showcased throughout the country in Holiday Inns; and

WHEREAS, In 1958, he moved the company to McKenzie and the enterprise grew into an enormous success, eventually employing 700 people; and

WHEREAS, Mr. Gaines also undertook entrepreneurial ventures in development, including a motel, a bowling alley, golf course, trucking company, restaurant, Wal-Mart centers, and go-cart production; and

WHEREAS, Gaines Manufacturing Company was one of the first businesses to participate in the Carroll County Chamber of Commerce's "Partners in Education" program with local schools; and

WHEREAS, Because of his many philanthropic endeavors and community service, Ben Gaines was honored as the Carroll Countian of the Year in 2000; and

WHEREAS, As an avid supporter of Bethel College, he was instrumental in bringing Bob Hope to Bethel in 1975, an event that raised over \$100,000 for the college and saved it from closing. The school's Olympic-sized pool was named "The Ben and Ludie Gaines Pool" in appreciation of the family's generous contributions, as many Bethel students have been able to go to college because of the scholarships made available over the years by the Gaines family. In recognition of the Gaines' unselfish generosity, commitment, and devotion to Bethel's legacy and future success, the college in 1997 honored both Mr. Gaines and his wife, Ludie, with Doctor of Humane Letters degrees; and

WHEREAS, Mr. Gaines was deeply devoted to his State and country and played an important role as an advocate for and advisor to numerous public servants, including in recent years, Governor Ned McWherter, Congressmen Ed Jones and John Tanner, and countless other national, State, and local leaders; and

WHEREAS, Ben Gaines was an active and devout member of the First United Methodist Church in McKenzie, which he served faithfully for years; and

WHEREAS, He was deeply devoted to his wonderful family and always exemplified family values of the highest order; and

WHEREAS, Mr. Ben Gaines enjoyed the loving and constant companionship of the childhood sweetheart who became his wife of 60 years, Mrs. Ludie Montgomery Gaines, and was the proud father of his beloved children, Patricia Gaines Kriebel, Jodie Gaines Johnson, and Ben Marlin Gaines, Jr.; and

WHEREAS, He will also be greatly missed by his devoted sons-in-law, Robert Kriebel and Jeff Johnson; his extraordinary grandchildren, Jennifer, Jessica, Jake, and John Johnson; Ben, III, and Bailey Gaines; and Robert Scott Kriebel; his loving sisters, Alvaree Sneed and Sibyl Garner; his other family, many friends, neighbors, fellow veterans, and the entire community; and

WHEREAS, Mr. Gaines leaves behind an indelible legacy of diligence, determination and success in business, compassion and charity in community life, and loyalty and dedication in all his endeavors; and

WHEREAS, McKenzie and Carroll County have lost a leader, Tennessee has lost a true volunteer, and America has lost a patriot; therefore, it is fitting that this State's General Assembly should pause to remember and give thanks to the Almighty for creating the bountiful life and legacy of this exceptional human being; now, therefore,

BE IT RESOLVED BY THE SENATE OF THE ONE HUNDRED THIRD GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF THE STATE OF TENNESSEE, THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES CONCURRING, That we honor and cherish the memory of Mr. Ben Marlin Gaines, Sr.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, That we express our sympathy and offer our condolences to the beloved and extraordinary family of Mr. Gaines.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, That an appropriate copy of this resolution be prepared for presentation with this final clause omitted from such copy.

